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TAB B

The Soviet Delegation at Rio de Janeiro
XVIIIth International Geographical Congress, 9-18 August 1956

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GERASIMOV, Innokentii Petrovich. Born 1905.

Director of the Institute of Geography, Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

Professor of Soil Geography, University of Moscow.

Vice-President, All-Union Geographical Society.

The only active geographer now a member of the Academy of Sciences (except

A.A. Grigorev, who has retired from his more active administrative positions).

Gerasimov was clearly the leader of the delegation and spoke for the delegation at all times. He has more status than any other member of the delegation, being a member of the academy (the only active geographer out of 6,000 trained geographers in the Soviet Union with this distinction), and occupying key positions in the three principal agencies of geographic work -- the Institute of Geography of the Academy of Sciences, of which he is director; the All-Union Geographical Society, of which he is a vice-president (Kaleenik is the other vice-president); and in the Department of Geography at the University of Moscow, by far the largest in the country.

Gerasimov is personally pleasant. He warmed up considerably during the course of the conference. At first, he used the interpreter heavily -- as though he wanted to be careful what he might say -- but as time went on, he spoke more and more directly. He knows some English and French, but has difficulty understanding and speaking either. My own guess is that toward the end of the conference, as he gained confidence in the friendliness of the other members of the congress, and perhaps in himself, and as he thought more about the desirability of having a Soviet representative in the top executive committee of the International Geographical Union, and as he might well envisage himself as that representative, and as he noted the tremendous advantage enjoyed by those able to speak directly in Western languages, he sought more and more to wish to show the maximum facility possible.

He is able and intelligent. He clearly wants Soviet participation in international geographic affairs and will work in that direction. I would appraise him as being realistic in estimating what is feasible and not feasible in developing Soviet participation. Specifically, I should expect him to press, as opportunity evolves, for: (1) increased Soviet participation in the sessions of the International Geographical Union (this will probably be achieved without any strain or dispute); (2) acceptance of Russian as an official language for presentation of papers but not, at this time at least, for Russian as a working language in the business of the Union. He in fact proposed this at the closing assembly; (3) for the membership of the Chinese Peoples Republic as a member of the Union. (He spoke with officers of the Union about this and also with geographers from other peoples republics.); and (4) for election to the executive committee (9 members) of one representative of "one-third of the world's people encompassed in the area from the Pacific to Central Europe". (There is no possibility of such an election for the next four years, as all the offices are now full.)

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Gornung is the youngest member of the delegation. He speaks excellent French and good English and is working on a doctoral dissertation on a topic in physical geography in North Africa. (This is the area of special competence of Professor Jean Drosch of the University of Paris, a member of the Communist Party who visited Moscow last summer as a representative of the French Academy of Science.) Gornung once complained to me that he spent lots of his time getting material for the French (presumably Drosch), but that he needed to do it as the guido pro quo for their help. I have observed him closely for ten days living in the same hotel, eating usually three meals in the same small dining room, and circulating in the hotel and meetings. He impresses me more as a young man bucking for a promotion than as a man who has any special power over the delegation or any special supervisory function. He regularly defers to other members of the delegation; if the elevator is crowded and one person must wait behind, it is he. He does not shepherd the whole delegation, but sticks close to Gerasimov and looks out for him on many small matters. He is bright, facile in languages, and probably rather efficient. I think he can see a role for himself as an intermediary between Soviet geographers and others. He told me he could facilitate contacts. My own guess is that this is a self-defined potential role with status, rather than an assignment by any other person or agency, but I have no real information on this. He kindly gave me reprints of three short articles he had written, one an obituary of De Martonne, the great French geographer, one an account of inter-university geographical excursions in France, and one on the visit to the Soviet Union of two French geographers (Jean Drosch and Pierre George) last summer. His easy role is liaison between geographers of the USSR and France and he was caught a little at the conference by having to speak mainly English. Up to the present, he has little status as a geographer, but he is working in this direction. His calling card identifies him as a scientific collaborator in the Institute of Geography, Academy of Sciences of the USSR (of which Gerasimov is head).

KALESHNIK, Stanislav Viktorovich. Born 1901.

Kalesnik is one of the two Soviet geographers with top status. He is a corresponding member of the Academy of Sciences, vice-president of the All-Union Geographical Society and a Professor at the University of Leningrad. His research works are well known. He is in physical geography, particularly glaciology.

I was never able to establish real intellectual contact with him. He seemed to be somewhat reserved, as though he had something on his mind. Sometimes, he just sort of looked around as if trying to sort out his impressions and decide what they meant. This guess on my part is intuitive and may well be completely in error.

He reported that the All-Union Geographical Society library in Leningrad has 350,000 volumes, that it must buy its books (my earlier impression had been that it was on an official academic distribution list) and that the say library of the society was not very extensive. As indicated by his first name, he has some Polish background. His father is reported to have come from the part of Poland formerly in old imperial Russia.

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FORSDZOV, Aleksandr Nikolayevich

Chief, Section on Biogeography, Institute of Geography, Academy of Sciences of the USSR.

A rather silent type. Very sober at first, but smiled more and more as the meetings continued. Formerly a classics teacher of Latin, but that was long ago (probably in a secondary school). Now interested mainly in zoogeography, he has a collection of stuffed animals typical of the Soviet Union, for example.

He is also a professor, but apparently not on the geography faculty at Moscow University, apparently at a school of animal husbandry.

LYANHOV, Mikhail Yefimovich. Born 1920 (by his own account), married, 1 young child.

(N.B. Information supplied me on him was mostly incorrect. He does not work with Davitaya, nor in Leningrad.)

He is a climatologist who works in the university in Moscow and at the Academy of Sciences. His particular interest is climatic variability in the last century (i.e., the frequency and duration of extreme conditions, such as drought). He clearly is one of the junior members of the delegation. He was often in the company of the man in dark glasses (name unknown) who lives in Rio de Janeiro, speaks Russian, and looked after their transportation and occasionally acted as interpreter at the hotel (with personnel speaking Portuguese).

[NOTE: The above five came early to the congress and took part in a pre-congress excursion. I have no information on that participation.

The following four arrived together in the same plane as a member of the American delegates. I saw them first at the airport, therefore, quite by chance, and saw them frequently during ten days at the hotel and at the meetings.]

SALISCHCHEV, Konstantin Alekseyevich

Professor of Cartography, University of Moscow.

Author of the leading Soviet book on cartography; this book was on display. He has worked on most of the great Soviet atlases that have appeared. Apparently he was in charge of the Soviet exhibition, as the packages at the airport with exhibition material were in his name.

Though he was friendly, I really found out very little about him.

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DAVITAYA, Geofan(?) Farnayevich. Born September 1911

Deputy Chief, Hydro-Meteorological Service. He is also editor of the journal on Hydrology and Meteorology issued by this service. He is active in work for the International Geophysical Year and has been at international meetings on that subject.

My earliest personal relations were with Davitaya. He is a great hulk of a man, friendly, and at times a touch awkward. He reminds me in appearance somewhat of Sergius Yulishin of the Library of Congress.

He is married and has one daughter, aged 8, of whom he is proud. He showed me her photograph and she is a very attractive child (which we naturally compared with my own daughter, aged 10).

He did his university work at the University of Tbilisi and speaks fluent Georgian. He reported that his university work was in the Georgian language.

He speaks fairly good English. He was at Geneva a year ago with a committee on a world climatic atlas, which apparently Warren Thornthwaite (USA) will edit.

Davitaya is editor of a large book on climatic and water resources in the areas of new settlement of idle and virgin lands (Agroklimaticheskie i vodnye resursy raionov osvoeniia tselinykh i zalesnykh zemel'. Leningrad: Gidrometeorologicheskoe Izdatel'stvo, 1955. 463 pp.) I admired the work in the Soviet exhibition, and so when the exhibition was taken down, he gave me the copy.

Note that Davitaya is not in the university nor in the academy of sciences but in the hydrometeorological service.

SAUSHKIN, Iulian Glebovich.

Professor of Economic Geography of the USSR in the University of Moscow. Editor of the main Soviet journal for school geography, Geografiya v Shkole.

Has a trim black beard. Speaks a little English. Friendly, yet I never established very good intellectual rapport. He kindly gave me a copy of his recent book on Moscow. He is editor of a recent book on two hundred years of geography work in the University of Moscow.

Discussions with him reveal a sharp split within Soviet economic geography on the proper methods of studying this subject. He spoke disparagingly of the work of Vesytin, who is in the Institute of Economics of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, as being merely statistical, whereas he, Saushkin, was interested in a more geographic approach, by which he seemed to mean regional.

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POKHISHNEVSKII, Vladimir Vlashevich.

Pokhishnevskii, is editor of the Referativnyi Zhurnal Section on Geography.

He brought me from Moscow a copy of Volume 3 of Voprosy Geografii, devoted to urban geography, in which he had two articles, but which was edited by Professor Margoiz of Moscow. I later noticed a book on display about Volkov, the great Russian climatologist of the last century. This book was by Pokhishnevskii; it may have been his doctoral dissertation. When I spoke to Pokhishnevskii about the book, he seemed pleased, and later gave me the copy.

Pokhishnevskii was something of a lone wolf in the delegation. He sometimes ate breakfast by himself, coming down at another time than the other delegates, usually earlier. He moved more by himself. I should judge that he is outside the inner circle and is regarded perhaps by the professors and academy of science research workers as a translator and editor.

His note paper reads: "Institut Nauchnoi Informatsii Akademii Nauk SSSR. Glavnyi Redaktor Referativnogo Zhurnala "Geologiya i Geografiya" (This may be out of date as at the beginning of 1956, geology and geography were separated.) The address is Baltiiskii Pos. 442b, Moscow D-219, USSR.

The room locations may have some significance. They stayed in the Aeroporto Hotel. Gerasimov had a double room, 505/6. This was sort of headquarters. Here were invited certain officials of the Union for a chat one evening, Monday, 13 August. Present were: L. Dudley Stamp, president of IGU; George Kimble, secretary; and George B. Cressey, ex-president; Wallace W. Atwood, Jr., head of the U.S. delegation; and Chauncy D. Harris, incoming vice-president of IGU. Russian geographers present: Gerasimov, Gornung, Davitaya, Saushkin, Lyakhov, and Salishchev (according to my memory; I did not make notes at the time).

Presumably here too were invited the geographers of Communist countries a night or two later: representatives of German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia?, Yugoslavia (sic), but not of Poland.

He did not share this room with anyone else, or rather this suite of two rooms. Salishchev and Saushkin, both professors at Moscow, shared room 904. Davitaya and Pokhishnevskii, both outside the regular core group at universities and institute of geography, shared room 402. Kalesnik originally had a room to himself, 406, but apparently Gornung later moved in (from 405). Gornung and Lyakhov were originally in 405 but when Gornung moved out, apparently Formozov moved in (from 705).

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Two Ukrainian geographers came late. I did not really get acquainted with them: ZAMORII, Professor of physical geography, University of Kiev; and TERP, Professor of geomorphology, University of L'vov.

A. N. Glinkin, who was supposed to come with the group as a translator, took ill just before the group left and was unable to make the trip. They later heard that he had gone to the hospital. They reported his trouble as colitis (it may have been appendicitis).

There was a very perceptible warming up of the Soviet delegation during the course of the conference. Reserved at first, they were (to me at least) noticeably more friendly the morning after their official election to the Union.

Salishchev seemed to warm up after words of praise for the Soviet atlases and after it looked as though a Commission on National Atlases might be set up with him as chairman.

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